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UNCLAS ROME 005684

SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

USUN NEW YORK FOR AMBASSADOR NEGROPONTE AND LTAMLYN
USAID/W FOR ADMINISTRATOR NATSIOS, AA/DCHA WINTER, AA/AFR
NEWMAN AND DAA/AFR BROWN, DCHA/D/FFP LANDIS, DCHA/OFDA
STATE FOR IO A/S HOLMES, A/S PRM DEWEY, A/S AFR KANSTEINER,
AFR/EA, IO/EDA KOTOK
USMISSION GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR MOLEY AND USAID/KYLOH
BRUSSELS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS AND USAID/LERNER
NSC FOR JDWORKEN AND AFRICA DIRECTORATE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [EU](#) [WFP](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: LETTER TO MARTTI AHTISAARI, UN SPECIAL ENVOY FOR
THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA, FROM
AMBASSADOR TONY P. HALL ON THE PRESENT CRISIS IN THE HORN OF
AFRICA

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF A LETTER TO MARTTI AHTISAARI, UN
SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN ETHIOPIA AND
ERITREA, DATED DECEMBER 22, 2003, FROM TONY P. HALL,
AMBASSADOR, U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES, ROME. BEGIN
LETTER:

"THE HONORABLE MARTTI AHTISAARI
UN SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS
IN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK 10017-3505

DEAR PRESIDENT AHTISAARI,

I HAVE FOLLOWED WITH KEEN INTEREST AND APPRECIATION
REPORTS OF YOUR VISITS TO BOTH ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA IN JULY
AND MOST RECENTLY IN NOVEMBER. YOUR INVIGORATING FOCUS ON
THE CONTINUING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, CHRONIC FOOD INSECURITY,
AND STRATEGIES TO REDUCE VULNERABILITY TO FUTURE DISASTERS -
IS SORELY NEEDED.

I FIRST TRAVELED TO ETHIOPIA DURING THE GREAT FAMINE OF
1984-85, AND SAW FIRST HAND THE ENORMOUS SUFFERING OF
ETHIOPIA'S POOR IN THE NORTHERN HIGHLANDS. IN A NUMBER OF
VISITS SINCE THEN, I AM A PERSONAL WITNESS TO THE EFFORTS OF
THE UNITED NATIONS THAT, OVER THE YEARS, HAS MADE AN
ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF MILLIONS OF ETHIOPIANS
AND ERITREANS.

BUT I AM ALSO AWARE, AS I AM SURE YOU ARE, OF A WEALTH
OF RECENT STUDIES (TUFTS UNIVERSITY, SAVE THE CHILDREN/UK,
AND OTHERS) WHICH CONFIRM THAT: 1) RAINFALL PATTERNS ARE
BECOMING INCREASINGLY ERRATIC IN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA WHICH
TRANSLATES TO THE REALITY THAT NATURAL EMERGENCIES ARE
BECOMING ENDEMIC IN THE REGION; AND 2) ABSOLUTE DESTITUTION
IS INCREASING IN ETHIOPIA'S NORTHERN HIGHLANDS AND PROBABLY
ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION. AND COMPLICATING THESE SOBERING
TRENDS IS OF COURSE THE TRAGIC BORDER CONFLICT THAT CLAIMED
120,000 LIVES FROM 1998 TO 2000 - THESE WOUNDS HAVE NOT YET
HEALED.

DESPITE THE OBSTACLES, IT IS ENCOURAGING TO NOTE THAT
ETHIOPIA IN PARTICULAR IS FINALIZING A NEW COALITION FOR
FOOD SECURITY EFFORT TO ADDRESS CHRONIC FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD
FOOD INSECURITY OF SOME 15 MILLION PERSONS OVER THE NEXT 3-5
YEARS. THE QUESTION IS - HOW DO WE COLLECTIVELY MAKE THIS
AMBITIOUS PLAN DO-ABLE?

AT A MINIMUM WE NEED TO GO BEYOND BUSINESS AS USUAL. IN
THIS PROCESS UN LEADERSHIP IS CRUCIAL. THE UN NEEDS TO
COMMIT TO SENDING ITS BEST AND BRIGHTEST TO THE REGION BOTH
AT THE LEVEL OF THE UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR AND UN AGENCY
HEADS. STAFF FROM MY MISSION, WHO HAVE RECENTLY VISITED
ETHIOPIA, HAVE REPORTED BACK TO ME THIS SPECIFIC WORRY.

IN SHORT, THERE ARE EXTRAORDINARY NUMBERS OF PEOPLE
AFFECTED, EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNTS OF MONEY REQUIRED, AND AN
EXTRAORDINARY CAPACITY NEEDED TO MOVE FORWARD. NONE OF US
INVOLVED WITH ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA CAN BE AT EASE WITH THE
GRAVITY OF THE PRESENT SITUATION. NOTHING LESS THAN A
RENEWED AND SUSTAINED HUMANITARIAN ENGAGEMENT BY THE UNITED
NATIONS, IN TANDEM WITH THE RESPECTIVE HOST GOVERNMENTS,
NGOS AND DONORS AT ALL LEVELS TO REINFORCE AND REFINE OUR
RESPONSE CAPACITY, IS REQUIRED.

IN CLOSING, THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU'RE DOING ON
BEHALF OF THE POOR AND HUNGRY OF THE HORN OF AFRICA. GOD
BLESS. SINCERELY, AMBASSADOR TONY P. HALL." END OF LETTER.

2. US MISSION ROME WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF USUN NEW YORK COULD
PASS THIS TEXT ALONG TO PRESIDENT AHTISAARI.

13. ORIGINAL SIGNED LETTER WILL FOLLOW. HALL

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